

VARIETY HEARING INSTRUMENTS

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Honorable Donna Shalala
Secretary of Health and Human Svcs
Room 615F
200 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20510

October 17, 2000

Dear Secretary Shalala:

The Food and Drug Administration is in the process of proposing changes to the way hearing aids are sold that could put me out of business and impede access to the hearing services for millions of our nation's hearing impaired and seniors.

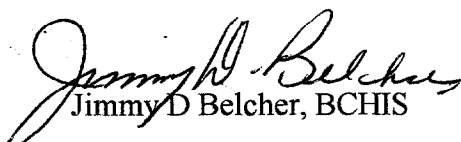
I am a Board Certified, State Licensed. Hearing Instrument Specialist. For over twenty four years, I have provided quality hearing health care services to thousands of hearing impaired in both Alabama and Georgia. Presently, all three members of the hearing health care delivery team, (Hearing Instrument Specialist, Audiologist, and Physicians) are recognized as qualified entry points into the hearing health care delivery system. The rule FDA is advocating would allow audiologist, without any justification, to instill themselves as the sole entry point into hearing healthcare by allowing states to require expensive and non essential tests that only audiologist are qualified to perform.

Allowing audiologists an exclusive role in the hearing aid delivery system, without unqualified medical data evidencing that such a role is necessary for public health reasons, would severely undermine public health and safety and would increase costs to the hearing impaired.

The medical community, specifically the American Academy of Otolaryngologists (Ear, Nose, and Throat) opposes this FDA proposal.

Please contact the Secretary of Health and urge that this FDA proposed hearing aid rule be withdrawn. I look forward to your response.

Cordially,


Jimmy D Belcher, BCHIS

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